

Bay Area Rapid Response to MacArthur Maze Meltdown

The tanker truck accident and explosion that occurred in the early morning hours of Sunday, April 29 created a gaping hole in the heart of the Bay Area's busiest freeway interchange, completely destroying one key connector and causing tremendous damage to another. Closure of the two roadways eliminated routes used by some 80,000 vehicles each day at the eastern end of the region's most heavily traveled corridor. Yet the nation's second most congested urban highway network has not succumbed to gridlock. There are many reasons mobility has been maintained for Bay Area residents and businesses. These include:

- Quick response by Caltrans, the California Highway Patrol, the City of Oakland and Bay Area transit agencies;
- Availability of nearby detours (see maps at right);
- Multiple transit options in the affected corridors;
- A leading-edge 511 system that alerted travelers to the emergency and provided detailed information about freeway conditions, transit service and carpooling options;
- Extensive media coverage; and
- Bay Area residents' resilience, adaptability, ingenuity and patience

Transit Operators Rise to the Challenge

Transit and carpooling have long played a key role in travel between San Francisco and the East Bay. Census data shows that solo drivers account for just 39 percent of the commute traffic in the Bay Bridge corridor, while trains, buses and ferries carry 40 percent of daily commuters, and carpoolers account for another 19 percent of all commute trips through the corridor, with the remaining trips taken via motorcycle, taxi or other vehicles.

Robust transit service through the transbay corridor has been especially critical in meeting the regional transportation challenge created by the damage to the MacArthur Maze. BART has shouldered much of the burden thus far, with the regional rail system registering an all-time daily ridership record of more than 375,000 passengers on Tuesday, May 1 — while maintaining a 94 percent on-time record.

The shift from driving to BART is clear: daily traffic counts at Bay Area toll bridges are down by about 20,000 over April levels, while passenger counts on the BART system have risen by about the same number.



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A portion of the I-80 eastbound to I-580 eastbound connector collapsed onto the connector between westbound I-80 and southbound I-880. (Photo by Noah Berger)



BART Leads Way As Travelers Opt for Transit

To handle increased passenger loads caused by the closure of the East Bay freeway connectors, BART has added cars to its trains and extended its morning and afternoon peak periods, when more frequent service is offered. BART's morning peak, which traditionally runs from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., now stretches from 5:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. Afternoon peak hours now run from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., instead of the usual 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

BART likely will carry much higher than normal passenger loads as long as the MacArthur Maze connectors remain closed, and the district will continue running longer and more frequent trains for as long as necessary. A key issue will be the shortage of parking at many BART stations, and the need to expand BART access via carpool, bicycle or existing bus routes. Other Bay Area transit agencies are stepping up to meet the regional mobility challenge as well:

- **Alameda-Oakland Ferry Service:** Deployed additional vessel to provide direct service to San Francisco from both Oakland and Alameda. Can add more ferries as demand warrants. Carried three times its usual number of passengers on Monday, April 30—the free transit day declared by Gov. Schwarzenegger.
- **Vallejo Transit/Baylink Ferry:** Additional ferry available to meet demand. Carried 60 percent more passengers than usual on Monday's free transit day. Vallejo Transit bus service carried some 2,000 more passengers than usual Monday.
- **AC Transit:** Made 25 additional buses available each day for both local and transbay service. Has extra buses standing by at Transbay Terminal in San Francisco to meet afternoon peak demand and maintain scheduling despite the need to re-route around freeway closures.

Backup services ready as circumstances warrant:

- **Golden Gate Transit and Ferry:** One additional ferry available.
- **San Francisco MUNI:** Up to 12 buses available for standby service from key locations such as the Ferry Building and Transbay Terminal as demand warrants.
- **WestCAT:** Added capacity for afternoon service from Transbay Terminal in San Francisco to western Contra Costa County



511 Puts Options at Travelers' Fingertips

The continuing shortage of parking at many BART stations, and the shift of traffic onto local arterials such as West Grand Avenue, have prompted a regional effort to get more travelers out of their cars altogether. Key to this initiative is the Bay Area's 511 system — available free of charge on the phone at 511 or on the Web at 511.org. The 511 Transit page provides detailed information on transit routes, fares and schedules, and offers an online transit trip planner to help commuters ride to the nearest BART station or anywhere else in the region. The 511 Rideshare page promotes carpool formation with an online ridematching tool and detailed information about the location and available capacity of park-and-ride lots.

